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Literary Trails, Urban Space and the Actualization of Heritage

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ABSTRACT

The look at the websites of tourist information offices of a lot of cities recently shows a new trend: walking tours on the trail of a novel, so-called *literary trails*. The city is explored following the trail of a fictional character. In novels drawing intensely on history, heritage sites become interlinked from a new perspective. Tourists follow these trails like neo-pilgrims. Hall's *circuit of culture* can be used to describe these relationships. Heritage manifests itself not just in traditional local practices, but is also formed in the global space of discourses. Heritage as a traditional practice is encoded on specific local conditions. These encodings can be stabilized in global discourses (e. g. in discourses on a novel or a film) but can be externalized as well. Externalized heritage is disembedded from its traditional framing. It becomes decoded under new conditions and is dynamized by tourist practices. The question is, which kind of reading turns out to be the dominant one for the heritage. The invention of literary trails can be considered from different perspectives with regard to the city and its heritage, which should be discussed with the help of two spanish novels.

Keywords: Literary Tourism, Literary Trails, Heritage, Circuit of Culture, Urban Space

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1. Literary tourism

Literature has been an inducement to travel for a long time (Towner, 2004; Watson, 2008). Examples of places, cities or regions profiting from literary associations can be found all over the world: Prince Edward Island in Canada is strongly linked to Lucy Maud Montgomery and her well-known novel, *Anne of Green Gables* (Cormack and Fawcett, 2011; Fawcett and Cormack, 2001; Squire, 1996b). The *Rider Haggard Literary Trail* in South Africa links the locations of the writer's life in the province of KwaZulu-Natal and the settings of his novels (Anon., 2006; Stiebel, 2004, 2007). In Romania, Transylvania is associated with Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula* (Light, 2007; Muresan and Smith, 1998; Reijnders, 2010). In Great Britain, places with artistic and literary associations have been promoted as tourist destinations for centuries, which makes it the primary locus of literary tourism concerning anglophone writers (Hardyment, 2000). South Tyneside, which is known as *Catherine Cookson Country* (Pocock, 1992), as well as the Lake District, which is known as the landscape of Wordsworth and also of Beatrix Potter (Scott, 2010; Squire, 1988, 1993, 1994a, b, 1996a), may serve as examples.

Robinson and Andersen (2011:3) define literary tourism as “the tri-partite relationship between authors, their writings, and the concepts of place/landscape”. It can be regarded as a kind of special interest tourism, and also as part of the heritage and cultural tourism sector (Herbert, 2001). A typology of literary tourism sites could contain the following categories (Herbert, 2001; MacLeod, Hayes and Slater, 2009):

- (1) The sites are concerned with the biography of an author, e.g. Stratford-upon-Avon as Shakespeare's birthplace or the Cimetière Père Lachaise in Paris as the burial plot of a lot of famous writers.
- (2) Places which provide the setting for a novel, e.g. the moors of Haworth as an inspiration for Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (Barnard, 2011; Pocock, 1987; Tetley and Bramwell, 2011) or the former Ocean View Avenue¹ in Monterey, California as the setting of John Steinbeck's novels *Cannery Row* and *Sweet Thursday* (Chiang, 2004; Fotsch, 2004; Norkunas, 1993).
- (3) Themed visitor attractions associated with a famous literary figure or character, such as the *World of Beatrix Potter* in Windermere, Cumbria, or *Green Gables Heritage Place* as part of L. M. Montgomery's Cavendish National Historic Site in Prince Edward Island, Canada, where the place is promoted with activities, such as themed hotels, gift shops or cafés (Squire, 1994a, 1996b).
- (4) Literary towns with an extensive literary reputé, such as Dublin, which is linked with the life and work of several of the most famous writers in the English language (Johnson, 2004), or literary festival towns, such as Trois-Rivières in Canada, the *capitale nationale de poésie du Québec*, with an international poetry festival, other poetry linked events and the *Promenade de la Poésie*, a tourist trail to discover downtown Trois-Rivières while reading excerpts from 300 Québec love poems displayed on the city's walls (Festival International de la Poésie, 2012).

- (5) From a future perspective, novels and cities can be linked within the framework of so-called *story tours*. This is a new way of exploring a city based not on existing novels, but by writing a historical novel or a crime story that can be downloaded onto smart phones. As a form of location-based storytainment, it is possible to walk through a city, from place to place, from chapter to chapter, on the track of the main character of a story developed to discover the city (Storytude, 2012).

The literary interest in every category is linked to sight-seeing and often examples of literary tourism are linked to heritage sites. However, MacLeod et al. (2009:157) characterize the relationship between the reader/visitor and the literary site as more powerful, as in the case of generic heritage sites: The first literary tourists in the 18th century visited sites such as the birthplaces, preserved homes or graves of dead poets because of a purely literary interest (Watson, 2008:5; Westover, 2012). This kind of early *fan culture* links literary tourism to pilgrimage: Writer's birthplaces, homes and graves become shrines for literary pilgrims (Ousby, 2002:18-19; Philips, 2011; Robinson, 2002; Watson, 2009). Nevertheless, what Herbert (1996:77) calls the *experiential qualities* of literary places also has an emotional aspect. Concerning Brontë country, Pocock (1987:138) describes that visitors were not just affected by the imagery of treading in Brontë's footsteps, but "with the thought that Heathcliff might appear". Today, the contemporary neo-pilgrims may have special imaginative experiences and knowledge about a place that are often affected by film and television adaptations (MacLeod et al., 2009:157). The merging of real qualities and tourists' imagination gives literary places a special meaning (Herbert, 1996, 2001). The tourists' encounters with the places constitute them as spatial narratives. The question is: What influences the production of these spatial narratives and how can they be read and interpreted? Urban literary trails may serve as examples to answer these questions.

2. Literary trails

Literary trails, as a special kind of themed tourist trail, organise "the visitor experience by providing a purposeful, interpreted route" (MacLeod et al., 2009:156; see also Goodey, 1974; Hayes and MacLeod, 2007, 2008; Hughes, 1998:29-30; Majdoub, 2010). They refer to places that provide the setting for a novel. Urban literary trails are (mostly) organized in two different ways: They retrace the marks left by writers in the cityscape in form of an assemblage of different writers/novels on a topic like the Grey Street Writers' trail in Durban, South Africa (McNulty, 2006; Stiebel, 2010) or in form of tracking an author's biography and novels in a city like the literary tour of Mordecai Richler's Montreal (Griffiths 2011). More specifically, urban literary trails can be walking tours on the trail of a fictional character in a novel. Local tourism organisations or tour operators develop a route for visiting the settings of the novel, and so to bring the plot to life. In novels drawing intensely on history (such as „The Da Vinci Code“ by Dan Brown²), historic sites become interlinked from a special perspective. "Linking individual attractions and sites of literary interest together creates a more potent and penetrative tourist product" from a promotional point of view (Robinson and Andersen, 2004:22). Hayes and MacLeod (2007:48-49) opine that tourist trails can be

helpful for environmental conservation, visitor management and economic development, and they contribute to creating a more holistic experience of place. Heritage trails especially are also contributing to a deeper sense of place (Patullo, 1997:143-147).

Heritage from a tourist perspective is as much as literature an inducement to travel. Visiting a city often means visiting its historic areas. Historic city centres are heritagescapes as well as touristscapes. From a social constructionist perspective, both tourist space and heritage are not “given”, they are “made” (for heritage: Bendix, 2000; Brett, 1996; Wöhler, 2008a; for tourist space: Voase, 2006; Wöhler, 2008b; Young, 1999). In a Lefebvrian sense, heritage and space cannot only be thought of as products but must also be considered as mediums of social action (Lefebvre, 2000:85). *Geography-making* (Werlen, 1997; see also Van Wezemael, 2005) as the production of space can be understood as a permanent dialectic process between production and the produced, including the physical as well as the social and the mental. In this context, senses of heritage and senses of tourist space and place are being produced and reproduced in the performances and discourses of various kinds of stakeholders. The producers could be locals, experts, marketing managers, writers and, of course, tourists. This idea refers to a circular context of *doing tourism* as well as *doing heritage*.

3. Circuit of heritage and literary tourism

With regard to the work of Stuart Hall (1980; see also Pillai, 1992) and the Austrian historian Ernst Langthaler (1999), the *circuit of heritage and literary tourism* can be used to describe these relationships (Fig. 1). Heritage manifests itself not just in traditional local practices, but is also formed in the local as well as in the global space of discourses. Heritage as a discourse (*text perspective of heritage*; Langthaler, 1999:32) is produced by texts; texts from historians and also from city or tourism marketing. It is a form of encoding heritage for local practice, as well as for tourist practice.

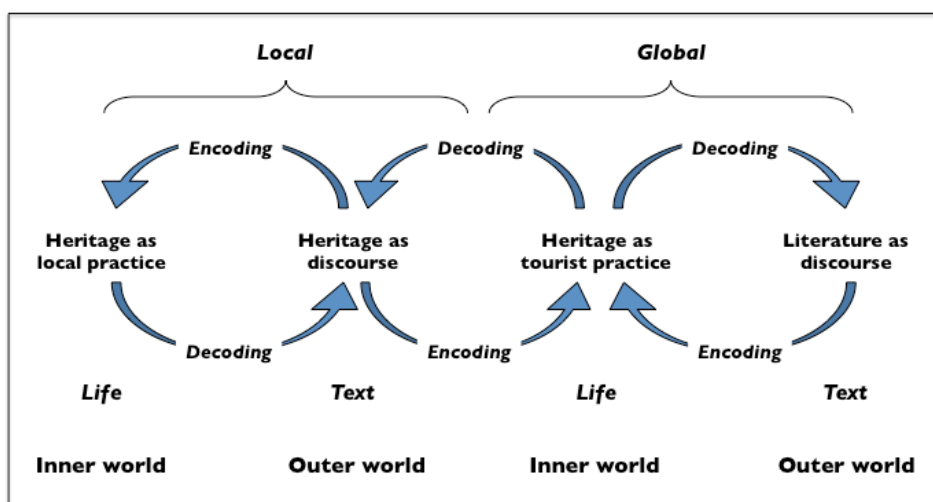


Figure 1: The circuit of heritage and literary tourism

Heritage as a tourist practice is decoding heritage from the life perspective of tourism. From this perspective, *doing tourism* is performing spaces and places, e.g. in the way of visual consumption or entertainment. In the case of literary tourism, it is also influenced by the discourse of literature. Book reviews or film versions of a novel cannot only spark interest in reading a novel, but also influence the way of perceiving the setting, which means here: a city and its heritage. These relationships will be illustrated with the help of two Spanish literary trails.

Barcelona is undoubtedly a city with a literary tradition and reputation. It was and is the home not just for important Catalan writers but was also an inspiration for a few of the best literary works in the Spanish language (Fokken, 2007:7). On the one hand the city served as a source of inspiration for many writers, but on the other, these urban narratives contribute to a kind of *literary construction* of Barcelona³ that affects the way how the city is perceived. Furthermore, popular urban narratives serve as an invitation for travellers to meet the city through the writers' eyes. Since 1998 the Libraries Association of Barcelona has been organising virtual literary itineraries, which should be understood as "an invitation to the discovery of Barcelona through literary landscapes" (Biblioteques de Barcelona, n. d.; see also Vila-Sanjuán and Doria, 2005). The success of the most popular contemporary Barcelona novel, the worldwide bestseller *The Shadow of the Wind* by Carlos Ruiz Zafón (first edition 2001), resulted in the publication of guides to the real settings of the novel and to the places that inspired it (for examples, see Burger, Geel and Schwarz, 2007; Doria, 2008; Vallejo and Escamilla, 2007) and motivated Barcelona's tourism office to include literary tours in their guided walking tours programme.

Besides *The Shadow of the Wind*, there is a second popular novel resulting in a literary trail in Barcelona: "Visit the settings for this thrilling novel, which you'll rediscover after almost 700 years filled with the same light and shade as in the feudal period" (Turisme de Barcelona, 2013). With these words, Barcelona's tourism office promotes a guided walking tour on the trail of the novel *Cathedral of the Sea* by Ildefonso Falcones (2006). The novel is about a man whose life is dedicated to building a cathedral in Barcelona. The highlights of the tour in the historic heart of the city – in particular the Gothic church *Santa Maria del Mar*, the model for the *Cathedral of the Sea* – also belong to Barcelona's heritage. From the text perspective of the discourse of literature, the heritage sites are decoded as a setting of a historic novel, which means they were not regarded as heritage sites with a heritage value as such, but they have a visual and emotional value for the literary tourist, arousing sentiments connected with the characters in the story.

The novel is set in Barcelona in the 14th century, and understanding the plot necessitates making yourself a picture of the city's fabric at that point in time. However, the sites are also decoded from the perspective of the heritage discourse. Local historians will emphasize the historic meaning of places and buildings, while tourism marketing managers tend to communicate heritage as an economic resource, as an attraction for global tourists. In this case, literary trails are nothing more than

another way of selling the city, and in the Barcelona case, it is one way among a lot of others.

The case is a little different if the city is not a tourism hot spot. This is true for Valladolid. The city has no specific literary reputation,⁴ but it is the birthplace of the writer Miguel Delibes (1920-2010). The marketing of Valladolid as the city of his magnum opus *The Heretic* (2006, first edition 1998) is more extensive than in the Barcelona case. The novel is a homage to Valladolid. Its main character, Cipriano Salcedo, is a merchant who is a member of Valladolid's small Lutheran community. The community was persecuted by the inquisition and so the members had to practice their worship in secret. Valladolid Turismo (n. d.) developed a brochure for the *Route of the Heretic*, which draws on the reconstruction of 16th century Valladolid, as well as on Valladolid as Delibes' hometown. The fact that part of the story and its characters are historically warranted, and that Delibes explicitly refers to the academic work of several historians may harmonize the relationship between the heritage and the literature discourse.

The brochure links Delibes' story and its characters with the city's heritage and history. It is trying to explain what happened in Valladolid in the time of *The Heretic*, the problems of the protestant community, the inquisition, and the auto-da-fés. The sense of the city's material heritage is constructed and the city is reconstructed in a double way: by the narrative of the novel and by the narrative of the literary trail. The pre-narrative of the city can be read by following the tracks of the texts.

However, it is not just the double perspective of the narratives. The code of any communicated message is contingent on something. Communication is not just a form of transmission; communication has to be understood as culture (Carey, 2009). The cultural approach to communication implicates a ritual view that "conceives communication as a process through which a shared culture is created, modified, and transformed" (ibid.:33), "whereby reality is produced, maintained, repaired, and transformed" (ibid.:19). As a consequence, the reality of the heritage/tourist setting of the literary trail cannot be seen as antecedent to the visit (Saretzki, 2010b). As a form of cultural communication (Squire, 1994a, b; see also Herbert, 1996, 2001), literary tourism constitutes the trail as a kind of *community of understanding* with regard to the identification with the narrative. That is what Bowman (1994) calls a 'country of words', the *imagined community* (Anderson, 1991) of literary pilgrims. Nevertheless, literary places as well as tourist or heritage sites are the result of discursive processes of producing meanings. Hall (1980) conceptualises processes of communication as circuits, as structures that are "produced and sustained through the articulation of linked but distinctive moments – production, circulation, distribution/consumption, reproduction" (ibid.:128). The distinct moments exert their determinacy upon the text, but in a relatively autonomous way. As an implication, no moment can fully determine another (Pillai, 1992) or, as Herbert (2001:316) shapes it for literary tourism: "... there is no guarantee that messages are read and interpreted in intended ways".⁵

Discursive processes refer to the problem that decoding and encoding are not always symmetric. To conceptualise literary trails as communities of understanding

necessitates asking for hegemonic structures of meaning. Hall's encoding/decoding model is a political model of communication: Which meaning turns out to be the dominant one is not inherent in the process of communication but results from social processes behind the structures of meaning. According to Hall (1980:134-136), practices of encoding prefer a certain reading of a text. This inscribed meaning is what Hall calls the *preferred meaning*. It corresponds, to some degree, to Gramsci's *senso commune*. Preferred meanings from a historical perspective have to be understood as sedimentations of an antecedent consensus that become hegemonic (Lears, 1985). The preferred meaning is the property of the text, but cannot prescribe the correspondence between encoded and decoded meanings. Primal through practices of decoding preferred readings (as properties of readers) can occur (Pillai, 1992). When literary tourists, as consumers of literary texts as well as of heritage messages, join in the process of signification by the way of their tourist practices – for example, by attending a guided walking tour on the trail of *The Heretic* and asking questions about the city's history – how are they decoding the message?

The degree of correspondence between the decoder and the encoder of the message will affect the degree of understanding, misunderstanding or disapproving of heritage messages. In Hall's terms: Besides the preferred readings, there are negotiated or oppositional readings of the literary trails text and its heritage understanding. For Valladolid's literary trail of *The Heretic*, preferred meanings may include the historical understanding of Valladolid in the 16th century. The trail tries to reconstruct the splendour of the city at this time and to emphasize the heritage value that connects the city's historical centre with the famous novel. *Negotiated readings* are constestations of preferred readings. Even if the decoder recognises the legitimacy of a hegemonic definition (abstract understanding), he reserves the right to a negotiated decoding in accordance with his particular local conditions (particular or situated logics; Hall 1980:137). In the Valladolid case, tourists may cut out the literary and historical significance because the trail is only regarded as a kind of tourist entertainment without any deeper meaning. Tourists constitute their own situated meaning while experiencing the trail. In the case of an *oppositional reading*, the decoder understands the message, but he completely rejects it and decodes it in an alternative way. The route of *The Heretic* is no longer accepted as a *route through a historic city centre with a heritage value* but as a *route through the setting of a historic novel*. The attempt of the trail's developer to prefer a heritage reading of the urban narrative seems to fail. But what does this kind of failing means for tourism marketing?

A text can be characterised as polysemic rather than plural. Readings are hierarchically organised and so are not equally available to the decoder. The preference of ways of reading over others refers to a power structuring inscribed within the text (Pillai, 1992). This is crucial for cities as tourist destinations. Understanding cities as place narratives (Lichrou, O'Malley and Patterson, 2008) means to accept multiple ways of writing and reading the city. The textualization of urban space and the spatialization of urban literary texts as well as the influence of positions of power has to be taken into account in the *circuit of heritage and literary tourism*: Who organises the reading's structure of dominance? Who defines which heritage belongs to the trail?

3. Global discourses, local practice

The invention of literary trails and the link to a city's heritage is a way of *doing heritage*. The inner world of the literary tourist contains mental representations. These representations are influenced by the outer worlds of discourses of literature as well as of heritage discourses. Guided walking tours as a way of *doing tourism* bring these representations to life. The novel generates what Barthes (1968) called a *reality effect* and, therefore, the capacity to offer narrative and visual anchors of meaning in fragmented urban scenarios (Jaguaribe, 2005). By using the reality effect, the novel and the literary trail serve as a kind of framing. Framing means "to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text" (Entman, 1993:52). Thereby preferred readings become pioneered.

Tourist practices in heritage tourism can be regarded as a way of actualizing heritage (Saretzki and Furnell, 2013). Their readings of the heritage message reproduce, i.e. modify, discourses of heritage. The interest and appreciation of heritage sites by tourists can stabilize heritage as a local practice. Attracting tourists to cities in the name of literature is a way of stabilizing the community- and identity-serving nature of heritage. The way of linking several heritage sites in a novel's context fills heritage with new meanings and thus it enables the revival of forgotten or disregarded places and serves identity again. In the case of Valladolid, the literary success of Delibes' novel directs people's attention to an experience of a relatively unknown side of Spanish heritage.

On the other hand, the reality effect makes tourists less concerned with the distinctions between the fictional world of the novel and the historic meaning of a site. When a novel excites interest, feelings and involvement may be real for the tourist, but it may have no connection to the reality of the heritage. The complete literary perception of heritage sites externalizes heritage. This kind of oppositional reading of heritage messages may lead to the disembedding of heritage from its traditional framing. In the case of Cannery Row in Monterey, Norkunas (1993:49-51, 93-96) concludes that Steinbeck's 'literary landscape' as a hegemonic story reconfigured Monterey's reality and replaced the historical landscape.⁶ Literature influences not just a city's tourist development but also the perception of its cityscape. Squire (1996a) emphasizes the importance of 'popular' fiction unlike 'official' or 'classical' fiction in shaping people's ways of seeing places. Delibes' classic novel *The Heretic* may lead to a different understanding of (Valladolid's) urban heritage⁷ than in the Barcelona case: Falcones *Cathedral of the Sea* is a popular bestseller, serving peoples longing for suspense, mystique and romance. But heritage lose its traditional meaning when the romanticized imagination of the dramatic construction of a medieval cathedral overlays the local reality of a religious heritage site. The global discourse of literature and tourism destabilizes the local practice. Urban space is not perceived any longer as a medium of local culture and heritage but as a foil for people's literary longings. The Barcelona of Falcones *Cathedral of the Sea* becomes a *lieu d'imagination* (place of

imagination; Reijnders, 2010) for literary tourists, a place “where the symbolic difference between these two concepts [‘imagination’ and ‘reality’] is being (re-) constructed by those involved” (ibid.:41). According to Reijnders (ibid.), this construction implies a ‘cultural process of appropriation,’ which is contested. The ascription of meanings to Barcelona’s historical centre that derive from a popular bestseller links a global text perspective of literature with a global life perspective of tourism that is unconnected to the local life perspective of heritage. The effect is what we call *disneyfication* of heritage or cityscapes. The inner world and outer world of the local side of the process of heritagefication are no longer available for each other; the mutual relationships are disrupted when the preferred encoding of tourism marketing dominates the heritage discourse and a tourism-oriented theming suppresses local needs for serving identity. Heritage is going to be externalized and the city’s history becomes a *distory*, a disneyfied history (Fjellman, 1992). But understanding historic city centres as *lieux d’imagination* has to include its liminal and temporary nature (Reijnders, 2010:47) and therefore its contestability.

The two case studies of literary trails in Valladolid and Barcelona involve different conclusions with regard to the promotion of urban heritage. The articulation of linked but distinctive moments in Hall’s circuits of communication gives a city and its perception from outside a precarious nature (Saretzki, 2010b:288-289). In this regard Massey (1996:68) refers to ‘hybrid identities’: “[W]hat gives a place its specificity is not some long internalized history but the fact that it is constructed out of a particular constellation of relations, articulated together at a particular locus.” The process of making a sense of place involves local as much as global perspectives and – with regard to the circuit of heritage and literary tourism – discourses as much as practices. Massey (ibid.:66) concludes:

“The uniqueness of a place, or a locality, in other words is constructed out of particular interactions and mutual articulations of social relations, social processes, experiences and understandings, in a situation of co-presence, but where a large proportion of those relations, experiences and understandings are actually constructed on a far larger scale than what we happen to define for that moment as the place itself, [...] they [places] can be imagined as articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings. And this in turn allows a sense of place which is extraverted, which includes a consciousness of its links with the wider world, which integrates in a positive way the global and the local.”

For literary trails, the understanding of urban space as articulated moments refers to the textualization of urban space. The trail densifies the urban texture and connects its heritage sites to a larger idea of the city (Löbbermann, 2003:117). The case studies have shown that this implies a chance of actualizing heritage, but also carries the danger of commodification and disneyfication of cityscapes.

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¹ In 1957 (only twelve years after the first edition of *Cannery Row*) the name *Ocean View Avenue* was formally changed in *Cannery Row* due to the novel's popularity as an inspiration for tourism in Monterey (Chiang 2004:319-320).

² Examples can be found at <http://www.paris-tours.net/?event=offer.detail&offerId=10834> or <http://www.britishtours.com/france/da-vinci-code-tours-paris>.

³ The anthology *Urban Narratives: The Literary Construction of Barcelona* by Margarida Casacuberta and Marina Gustà (2010) provide a multitude of examples.

⁴ Except for the historic house museum Casa de Cervantes, the house where Cervantes lived between 1604 and 1606 and where he finished the first part of his literary masterpiece *The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote of La Mancha* (1605). The house is part of Spain's National Heritage since 1916 and has been transformed into a museum (Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte, n. d.).

⁵ In their contributions to the field of literary tourism Herbert (2001) and Squire (1994b, 1996) use Johnson's *circuits of culture approach* (1986), which focuses on social practices. In contrast, Hall's *encoding/decoding model* and the following *circuit of culture* (developed together with du Gay et al.) is similar but refer to a constructionist approach based on theories of discourse and semiotics, on questions of signification and articulation (du Gay, Hall, Janes, Mackay and Negus, 1997; Hall 1980, 1997).

⁶ In contrast, Walton (2001) draws a different conclusion and calls for a more nuanced interpretation of collective invention of Monterey's Cannery Row.

⁷ An understanding that may support the community- and identity-serving nature of heritage.